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SUBJECT: Belarus Reneges on SA/LW Destruction; De-mining on Track

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Minsk previously asked the OSCE for help securing stockpiles of excess Small Arms and Light Weapons (SA/LW), and in their destruction. Several OSCE missions, following the UK's lead, were ready to contribute. Now, however, Minsk has withdrawn its offer to destroy excess SA/LW, and is only asking the OSCE to pay to store these weapons. The GOB also will not destroy any MANPADS. Belarus' MFA claims this change was due to a lack of interest on the part of donors, a charge the British Embassy refutes. The MFA also stated it has sufficient support to destroy its entire stockpile of excess land mines. End summary.

#### GOB Reneges on Destruction

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¶2. (SBU) On October 26, British charge Greg Quinn briefed Poloff on recent developments on two proposed OSCE projects to secure Belarusian SA/LW stockpiles and to destroy excess SA/LW. The British Embassy is the main POC in Minsk for both programs. Several assessment visits have already been conducted for these projects, and in March the GOB destroyed 14 MANPADS as a demonstration of its intent to move forward on these projects. However, Quinn said in mid-October the British OSCE delegation in Vienna asked the Belarusian delegation what the GOB would contribute to these two projects to show their seriousness: whether the GOB would pay to destroy excess ammunition, finally commit to destroying MANPADS, or providing any other aid in kind. Quinn said the Belarusian delegation replied that no MANPADS were to be destroyed, and that the OSCE had misheard Minsk's request. Minsk does not want any SA/LW destroyed, it just wants OSCE help in securing the excess SA/LW it has. Quinn affirmed the UK's strong preference is to destroy excess SA/LW, including MANPADS, not just pay to secure it.

#### GOB Spins the Explanation

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¶3. (SBU) Poloff met with Aleksandr Khainousky, Deputy Head of the International Security and Arms Control Department at the MFA, on October 31 to receive an update on the SA/LW projects and on Belarus' de-mining needs. Khainousky said the GOB requested help in July 2003 with two projects, SA/LW stockpile security and destruction of surplus SA/LW. Improving stockpile security would cost around three million Euros, and destruction of excess SA/LW would cost around USD 800,000.

¶4. (SBU) Khainousky stressed the GOB wanted to destroy its excess SA/LW, but the three or four UK-led assessment missions had all

stressed stockpile security only. After two years no donors appeared willing to destroy excess SA/LW, so Minsk dropped that project. Khainousky said Belarus has no excess MANPADS to destroy, but decided to destroy 30, including the 14 destroyed in March, as a gesture of goodwill. He said a few OSCE delegations had agreed to provide some funding for stockpile security, but they will only fund 20 percent of the project. Belarus' OSCE delegation plans to create a "Friends of Belarus" group, similar to the previous Friends of Tajikistan, to attract donors for SA/LW destruction. [Note: Poloff subsequently shared this GOB view with Quinn, who called it, "fanciful spin."]

#### De-Mining Looks Good

15. (SBU) Khainousky also addressed Belarusian requests for support to destroy surplus anti-personnel land mines. Belarus has roughly 300,000 non-PFM land mines. Minsk is working with the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA), with funding from Canada, Lithuania and others, to destroy these mines. He said NAMSA approved this project in late October. Belarus also has over three and a half million PFM-1 and PFM-1S land mines, which are much harder to destroy as they release toxic gases when exploded. Khainousky said the European Commission has agreed to provide EURO 3 million to destroy this entire PFM stockpile, and the EC will issue a tender in November for their destruction. Khainousky said no more assistance is needed on land mines.

#### Minsk Disappointed in the U.S.

MINSK 00001359 002 OF 002

16. (SBU) Khainousky stated the MFA was disappointed the U.S. delegation to the UN's First Committee called for a vote on Belarus' recent WMD resolution (which passed 150 to 1, with only the U.S. voting against). He said this resolution is approved by consensus every three years, and that Minsk hopes the U.S. would allow it to be passed by consensus procedure when it is before the UNGA.

17. (SBU) Comment: Despite the MFA's spin, it appears Minsk has changed its mind on the destruction of excess SA/LW. This follows a previous reversal when the Belarusian OSCE delegation originally said Minsk would destroy MANPAD stockpiles, but later changed its story after the UK offered to provide industrial shears for the destruction. The British, at least, seem reluctant to pay for continued storage of excess SA/LW after destruction has been taken off the table.

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